

# Governor Carney, Lawmakers Announce Support for Paid Parental Leave for State Workers

**Proposal offers 12 weeks of paid parental leave, would make Delaware the 6th state to offer the benefit to public workers**

**DOVER, Del.** – Governor John Carney joined members of the General Assembly on Tuesday to call for passage of legislation that would offer 12 weeks of paid parental leave to state workers. The bill, [House Bill 3](#), would allow state workers to care for their families without losing wages, and would make Delaware just the 6th state to offer the benefit to public workers.

Governor Carney hosted Tuesday's announcement in his Legislative Hall office as lawmakers returned to Dover for the second half of the 149th General Assembly.

"Delaware can and should lead on this issue," said **Governor Carney**. "This legislation is about supporting our state workers – and creating a workplace that values family. Workers deserve time to spend with their families when their children are born, and this benefit will help us attract and keep good employees. Thank you to the state workers, members of the General Assembly, and advocates who are leading on this issue. I urge lawmakers to offer their full support for this legislation."

"As a nurse and a mother, I can tell you, those first days and weeks at home with a new baby or child are the most crucial

for both the parent and the child,” said **Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long**. “It can also be a stressful time, and the worry of getting the time off, as well as a paycheck, shouldn’t be a barrier to establishing a strong and healthy family bond. It is essential, and everyone should be able to enjoy these types of benefits.”

“The State of Delaware has an opportunity to lead on leave, and I am so encouraged by the support of my colleagues and Gov. Carney. Our dedicated state workers deserve to have the time to experience the all-important and educational “firsts” with a new child, without the anxiety of leaving their child too soon,” said **Representative Debra Heffernan, the prime sponsor of House Bill 3**. “Having a child is completely life-changing, and we should be supporting our state workers as they navigate that experience.”

“Many of our state workers rely on two incomes to cover household expenses so taking unpaid leave is not an option. The availability of paid parental leave will be transformative to those working families, so they don’t have to choose between their career or their home life,” said **House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst, co-sponsor of House Bill 3**. “I am so proud to see Gov. Carney back this policy. Delaware has the chance to be one of the leading states on this issue and we need to continue to champion the discussion around it.”

“Anyone who’s been a working parent understands how hard it is to leave a newborn at home so that you can pay your bills,” said **Senate Majority Leader Margaret Rose Henry**. “Paid parental leave is a step forward and for thousands of moms and dads across Delaware, but it’s also key to our kids’ futures and to the strength of our communities. This is common-sense health and economic policy that I’m proud to support, and I’m glad that Gov. Carney is stepping up for moms and dads across our state.”

The United States is one of only nine countries in the world –

and the only industrialized nation – that does not offer paid maternity leave, and one of only a handful of high-wealth nations that does not offer paid paternity or parental leave. House Bill 3 would make Delaware a leader on the issue. Under the legislation, full-time state employees, including teachers, would be eligible for 12 weeks of paid maternity or paternity leave after one year of employment. Parents would be eligible for leave for up to one year after the birth of a child, or the adoption of a child under the age of six.

Passage of House Bill 3 would make Delaware the sixth state to offer paid parental leave for state workers. Delaware would join Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Virginia, and Washington D.C. in extending the benefit to public workers.

More and more, families rely on two incomes to cover household expenses, and lose billions in wage by taking unpaid leave to care for their families. Nationally, nearly one-quarter of moms are back at work within two weeks of giving birth.

“We are thankful to Governor Carney for supporting House Bill 3 and paid parental leave for state workers,” said **Mike Matthews, President of the Delaware State Education Association**. “When starting or adding to their families, our educators and state workers need to be able to spend the time needed at home with their newborns or newly adopted children. They shouldn’t have to choose between bonding with their new arrival and putting food on the table or paying their bills.”

“This legislation will help state workers remain together with their families during an important time in their lives, without having to worry about how they’re going to pay the bills,” said **Michael Begatto, Executive Director of Council 81 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees**. “We are very pleased that Governor Carney and legislators are considering the needs of state workers and their families, and thank them for moving forward with this legislation.”

“The bond between a parent and either their newborn or adopted child is the most fundamental element contributing to the healthy family unit as we envision it,” said **Dr. Richard Henderson, President of the Medical Society of Delaware**. “The 12 weeks of paid parental leave after giving birth or the adoption of an infant or child up to 6 years of age proposed in this bill removes the economic penalties and pressures associated with this life-altering choice. Equally as important is that it provides for the opportunity for this critical bonding to occur. The physicians of Delaware are glad to see the Governor’s support for this important legislation.”

“This bill would set a new standard for how states should and can invest in their workforce when it comes to paid parental leave,” said **Melanie Ross Levin, Director of the Office of Women’s Advancement & Advocacy at the Delaware Department of Human Resources**. “We are thrilled that Governor Carney and legislators are prioritizing a bill that recognizes the importance that both mothers and fathers play in child development.”

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*Photo caption: Gov. Carney announces support for House Bill 3, which would allow paid paternal leave for state workers.*